

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5701

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0142

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: APOP

SUBJECT: POPULATION CONTROL IN MAURITIUS

REF: 75 STATE 301427, 75 STATE 297241

1. MAURITIUS CONTINUES TO BE A LEADER IN FAMILY PLANNING. A SMALL ISLAND WHICH DEPENDS ON ITS SUGAR CROP FOR MOST OF ITS FOREIGN EXCHANGE, MAURITIUS EARLY-ON REALIZED THAT A CONTINUALLY GROWING POPULATION WOULD REQUIRE MORE AND MORE LAND. THIS IN TURN WOULD DESTROY THE ECONOMIC BASE THE ISLAND LIVES ON.

2. THE GOVERNMENT OF MAURITIUS STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE CONCEPT OF POPULATION CONTROL. THE MAURITIAN FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION (MFPA) A PRIVATE ORGANIZATION WITH GOVERNMENT TIES, IS THE PRIMARY ACTION ORGANIZATION. THE MFPA CELEBRATES ITS 19TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR. ACTION FAMILIALE, A NATURAL BIRTH CONTROL ORGANIZATION, IS ALSO ACTIVE. SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE MFPA THE BIRTH RATE IN MAURITIUS HAS FALLEN FROM 4.1 PERCENT TO 1.3 PERCENT (IN 1974). SINCE THIS PERIOD HAS BEEN ONE OF INCREASED MEDICAL CARE AND A FALLING DEATH RATE, THE POPULATION OF MAURITIUS CONTINUES TO GROW. HOWEVER, A ZERO POPULATION GROWTH (ZPG) RATE IS NOW A REAL POSSIBILITY BY THE YEAR 2000.

3. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF FAMILY PLANNING IN MAURITIUS ARE CLEAR. BECAUSE THIS IS A SMALL ISLAND, THE RESULTS OF FAMILY
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PLANNING BECAME NOTICEABLE SOONER THAN IN A LARGER COUNTRY, SUCH

AS INDIA. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT IF THE BIRTH RATE HAD REMAINED AT THE LEVEL IT WAS AT BEFORE FAMILY PLANNING CAME TO MAURITIUS, THE ISLAND WOULD HAVE NEEDED OVER 60,000 NEW JOBS DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS.

4. THE SUCCESS OF THE MAURITIAN FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS HAS ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF SEVERAL INTERNATIONAL FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS, SUCH AS THE WORLD BANK AND UNDP. THESE CONTRIBUTIONS HAVE, IN TURN, HELPED MAKE THE WORK OF THE MFPA A SUCCESS. THE USG HAS SEVERAL DIRECT AND INDIRECT FUNDING CHANNELS TO THE POPULATION PROGRAM SUCH AS IPPF CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MFPA, AID GRANT TO ACTION FAMILIALE THROUGH FPIA, SPECIAL POPULATION SELF-HELP FUNDS AND AID SPONSORED TRAVEL TO POPULATION SEMINARS.

5. MAURITIUS STILL HAS MAJOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS TO FACE. AS MORE AND MORE YOUNG PEOPLE RECEIVE AN EDUCATION THEY LEAVE THE SUGAR FIELDS AND LOOK FOR WHITE COLLAR JOBS. MOVEMENT TO THE CITY IS NOT A PROBLEM SINCE THE ISLAND IS SMALL ENOUGH TO ALLOW COMMUTING. YOUNG COUPLES ARE HAVING FEWER CHILDREN LATER, AND SPENDING THEIR MONEY ON CARS AND OTHER PERSONAL LUXURY ITEMS. LAST YEAR FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TEN YEARS THERE WAS A SLIGHT INCREASE IN THE BIRTH RATE IN MAURITIUS. THE COUNTRY IS STILL DEPENDENT ON ONE CASH CROP, SUGAR. THE INDUSTRIAL BASE IS SMALL, AND MANY OF THE NEW LIGHT INDUSTRIES EMPLOY MORE WOMEN THAN MEN. THESE PROBLEMS ARE NOT INSURMOUNTABLE AND MAURITIUS IS WORKING TO KEEP ITS POPULATION UNDER CONTROL.

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